



April 27, 2000

Museums to add solar panels

Source: Chicago Sun-Times

Publication date: 2000-04-22

Solar panels, \$4 million worth, will top Chicago's nine major museums and Lincoln Park Zoo in a clean-energy project to be announced today_Earth Day_by city and ComEd officials.

"It will be a good, high-profile start of a substantial change in the way we produce and conserve energy in the Chicago area," said William Abolt, commissioner of the city's Department of Environment.

Abolt and ComEd executive Pam Strobel will present the plan at Earth Day Festival 2000 at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Lincoln Park.

The new nature museum is among cultural institutions where solar, or photovoltaic, cells will be installed over the next 18 months.

Also on the list are the nearby zoo and the Adler Planetarium, Art Institute, Chicago Historical Society, DuSable Museum of African- American History, Field Museum, Mexican Fine Arts Museum, Museum of Science and Industry and Shedd Aquarium.

"There's nothing else like this anywhere else in the country," said Lew Crampton, president of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. "It shows again that Chicago is taking innovative approaches to help out the environment."

Each institution will get 50,000 kilowatt hours per year of sun power.

At the Field Museum, for example, that's one-quarter of its annual electricity needs.

In all, solar panels will provide more than 600,000 kwh per year, worth \$30,000, enough to power 60 homes.

If fueled by conventional sources, that much power would produce 200 tons of carbon dioxide, 1,110 pounds of nitrogen oxide and 1,710 pounds of sulfur dioxide.

Displays at the institutions will explain solar power to visitors, "so customers can start to understand what alternative energy sources are out there," said Mary O'Toole, ComEd's environmental services manager.

That will increase demand that eventually will drive down the cost of photovoltaics, O'Toole said.

The city will apply to the state Department of Commerce and Community Affairs for a Renewable Energy Trust Fund grant that could finance 60 percent of the project.

The rest of the cost will be split evenly by the city and the utility.

ComEd's share will come from \$12 million set aside to promote renewable energy sources under a March 1999 settlement with the city.

Solar cells for the project will be bought from Chicago Solar, which will start building a manufacturing plant on the West Side this summer.

Abolt noted that the site, at 445 N. Sacramento, was dedicated last August by Mayor Daley and U.S. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson "with the idea of making Chicago the center of the green industry in the Midwest."

Publication date: 2000-04-22

© 2000, YellowBrix, Inc.